

David Obey's working class background and progressive values drive his work as Wisconsin's 7th District Congressman. He believes that every hard-working American deserves an equal shot at the American Dream. That is why Dave strongly supports increased investments in education, health care and job training, fights to protect the rights of workers, promotes reform to make government responsive to the people, and advocates for tax cuts that benefit all Americans, not just the well off.

Dave grew up in Wausau where he and his wife, Joan, attended St. James Catholic School and graduated from Wausau East High School. Both received Bachelor's degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dave completed his graduate work in Soviet politics at the University of Wisconsin and expected to teach Russian and Chinese politics before he took a turn toward public service.

The same year that Dave married Joan he ran for the State Legislature and won. He served three terms in the Wisconsin State Assembly, representing Marathon County, and played a key role in creating Wisconsin's Technical College Districts and the state's public broadcasting network. He was also an early sponsor of Wisconsin's pioneering Homestead Tax Relief Act for seniors and served on the state commission that established Wisconsin's first Medicaid law.

Dave came to Congress in 1969, succeeding the newly appointed Defense Secretary, Mel Laird. Dave immediately became a leading spokesman for political and congressional reform to make government more accountable to its citizens. His efforts led to his chairmanship of a Congressional commission that expanded financial disclosure for Members of Congress, placed strict limits on outside income Members could earn, and ended the practice of retiring Members pocketing their surplus campaign funds.

Dave now serves as the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, which makes spending decisions for every Federal discretionary program. As the Chairman of the Committee, Dave spearheads efforts to: invest in education; expand access to quality, affordable health care; protect the environment; and strengthen homeland security. His leadership position on the Committee allows him to sit on each of its twelve subcommittees, which are responsible for producing the annual “must pass” spending bills.

Dave also understands the need for fiscally responsible budget policies. He fought tirelessly against unsound policies that created exploding deficits in the 1980s. Today, Dave is one of the House's leading advocates against current budget policies that have squandered the surpluses of the late 1990s, exploded the deficit, and endangered Social Security and Medicare. He strongly favors reducing the size of recent tax cuts that only benefit those making more than \$1 million a year and using those funds to reduce the deficit, invest in homeland security and provide for other critical domestic needs.

Dave Obey has been recognized by numerous Wisconsin and national organizations for his work, including the National Association of Community Health Centers, the National Farmers Union, the National Mental Health Association, the 7th Congressional District AFL-CIO, the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the National Council of Senior Citizens, Vietnam Veterans of America, the Wilderness Society, and Common Cause.

In his spare time, Dave enjoys playing the harmonica and performs with his two sons and

some friends in a bluegrass band, "The Capitol Offenses," which has recorded three albums.

[Return to Biography of David R. Obey](#)